



ANSWERING THE CALL

The Future Role of Canada's Primary Reserve

Interim Report of the Standing Senate Committee on
National Security and Defence

The Honourable Pamela Wallin, Chair
The Honourable Roméo A. Dallaire, Deputy Chair

COMMUNITY FOOTPRINT

Militias composed of civilians have defended Canada and fought its battles since early times. From Confederation until after the First World War, we had a Minister of Militia, not a Minister of National Defence. Many of today's Army Reserve units trace their origins to the pre-Confederation period, while Naval and Air Reserve units were not established until the 1920s. These units have deep roots in their communities.

Vice-Admiral Bruce Donaldson, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, told the Committee that the Reserve plays three roles in communities today.

"The first is operational. That is, they are trained and ready to respond in cases where disaster strikes within the community." Canada Command and the Regional Joint Task Forces, he said, are operationally organized "to be able to mobilize Reserves quickly in their communities and to have the relationships in place before a crisis, in order to enable the Reserves to react effectively in a crisis."⁶⁷

Secondly, the Reserve represents the Canadian Forces and its own regiments within communities. "The individual commanding officers and the services do a good job of local outreach and having a presence."⁶⁸

Lastly, said Vice-Admiral Donaldson, "I think the Reserves provide a great example for youth, but also of citizenship, leadership, and commitment to country. They bring something to their communities that few other organizations do. We are proud to have Reserves located throughout communities in this country to serve as that positive example."⁶⁹

He added, "We try to take seriously the relationship with the community and the important historical ties, but also the current representation that we expect the Canadian Forces to have in communities across the country. I think they do a pretty good job of this in most cases."⁷⁰

Canada's senior Reserve officer, Rear-Admiral Jennifer Bennett, said, "Engagement with our communities is twofold, both through the [individual Reservists] and through the units themselves." She spoke of the Reserve playing an important role in welcoming new Canadians, "inviting the community into the buildings for events such as citizenship ceremonies," adding, "We do a lot of community outreach not necessarily connected with our Canadian Forces training, but it allows us a presence in our communities to give a face and a greater understanding of the Canadian Forces."⁷¹

RETURNING TO COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

The Committee heard an interesting proposal to establish a Canadian National Leadership Program (CNLP), a modern version of the Canadian Officers Training Corps (COTC) program that was offered at Canadian universities from 1912 until it was ended by the military in 1968. The COTC introduced university undergraduates to a form of military service on campus, providing them with leadership and other military training and preparing them to join the Reserve or the Regular Force if they wished to do so.

Leading proponents of the CNLP idea are Rob Roy and John Richmond, part of the not-for-profit public policy organization the Breakout Educational Network, which promotes policy discussion through audio-visual media. The proposal is part of their Seven Year Project, which is intended to connect Canadians with their military.

As Mr. Roy told the Committee, “the Canadian Officer Training Corps for university students was cancelled just as universities were expanding exponentially with the arrival of the baby boom. At this crucial moment the Canadian Forces chose to withdraw from the universities, and the result has been an entire generation of upper- and middle-management Canadians who have had no exposure to the military.”⁷²

He and Mr. Richmond want to see the idea revived and considered not only by Canadian universities, but by the dozens of Canadian colleges that have sprung up since the COTC was ended.

Rob Roy says, “This is about leadership skills, which is why the universities are interested. They are interested in leveraging Canadian Forces educational experience on leadership into their students. They are facing demands from the business community; what are you actually doing with regard to hands-on, tangible leadership training.”⁷³

Chief of Reserves and Cadets, Rear-Admiral Bennett, told the Committee that she has been briefed on the CNLP proposal. “There is no question about the value of engaging Canadians in a leadership experience expanding their leadership abilities.” Acknowledging that the idea was certainly successful in the past,” she added, “our greatest challenge remains personnel in order to run, or to add more people to our training systems.”⁷⁴

The Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, Vice-Admiral Donaldson, raised a more ticklish issue. “As the vice-chief, I always have to ask the question: who will pay for this?”

With everything else that you have heard today, you would understand that we would be uncomfortable with a system that was not resourced.”⁷⁵

Mr. Roy told the committee that it is estimated that a pilot project involving 50 students would cost about \$1.6 million a year. The University of Alberta, he says, would be prepared to do this on a cost-sharing basis. He added that the idea has also been endorsed by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. “Where is the money going to come from?” said Mr. Roy. “It will come from the public demand that their children have an opportunity to have this program.”⁷⁶

While the Chair and Deputy Chair of the committee support and have been involved in promoting the idea of a Canadian National Leadership Program, any funding from DND is clearly the sticking point at present while transformation is underway.

Otherwise, although the Reserve has long served the important role of linking the military with Canadian communities, this role is no more clearly spelled out than that. Perhaps it is time for that “community footprint” to be more clearly defined.